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Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 16 July 1997, at 3 p.m.

President: Mr. SOMAVIA (Chile)
(Vice-President)

CONTENTS

INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS (continued)

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In the absence of Mr. Galuska (Czech Republic), Mr. Somavia (Chile), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 5.20 p.m.

INTEGRATED AND COORDINATED IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP OF THE MAJOR INTERNATIONAL UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCES AND SUMMITS (agenda item 5) (continued) (A/52/113-E/1997/18 and A/52/132-E/1997/57; E/1997/58 and 73; E/1997/NGO/4)

Ms. KILLINGSWORTH (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) introducing the report of the Director-General of FAO on the outcome of and follow-up to the World Food Summit (A/52/132-E/1997/57), submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 51/171 (1996), said it contained a description of the World Food Summit, which had been held at Rome from 13-17 November 1996 to renew global commitment to the task of eliminating hunger and malnutrition and achieving sustainable food security for all.

In preparation for the Summit, a series of technical background documents and a technical atlas had been compiled and subsequently published in a three-volume set. The Secretary-General, 19 organizations of the United Nations system and representatives of the intergovernmental and non-governmental sectors had participated in the Summit. Its results had included a declaration adopted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (E/1997/NGO/4), the Rome Declaration on World Food Security and the World Food Summit Plan of Action.

The Summit had increased public awareness of hunger and malnutrition and had resulted in the political commitment necessary to achieve a 50 per cent reduction in the number of undernourished people by 2015 and, ultimately, the complete elimination of hunger. While governments had the primary responsibility for creating an economic and political environment that ensured food security, international cooperation was also important.

The Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) was to report to the Council on follow-up to the Summit. To that end, FAO and the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) had submitted a proposal for inter-agency coordination of the Summit follow-up with a view to ensuring cost-effectiveness, country-level focus, flexibility and efficiency without any new funding mechanisms or institutions and with maximum use of electronic communication and networking, so as to avoid the incremental costs of frequent

meetings. The two organizations had begun consultations with other United Nations bodies to discuss the allocation of responsibilities for implementation, taking into account the follow-up to other conferences.

The Summit had called upon Governments, in partnership with civil society and the relevant institutions, to report to the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) on implementation of the Summit and to monitor that implementation at the national, subregional, regional and international levels through CFS which, in its turn, would report to the Council through FAO. The mandate of CFS had been modified to include some of the functions of the former World Food Council.

The FAO Council, at its most recent session, had welcomed the steps taken by a number of countries to prepare national plans of action, approved the work plan for development of the Food Insecurity and Vulrerability Information and Mapping System (FIVIMS), stressing the need for technical assistance in the interpretation of statistical data by many developing countries, noted with appreciation the cooperation established with the High Commissioner for Human Rights to promote work related to the right to food and welcomed the arrangements for inter-agency follow-up.

The machinery had thus been set in motion to ensure inter-agency and intergovernmental support for national efforts to implement the Summit Plan of Action. Intergovernmental monitoring was a way of ensuring complementarity and a fruitful interface with the work of the Council. In May 1998, CFS would consider reports from Governments and other actors on the first year of implementation of the Summit Plan of Action, which would thereafter be monitored on a yearly basis; efforts would be made to streamline reporting requirements and to make maximum use of reports already prepared for other bodies.

Ms. SCHOSSELER (Luxembourg), speaking on behalf of the European Union, said that the Council should adopt recommendations on the follow-up to the major conferences and implementation of the conclusions on poverty that had been adopted there, evaluate progress in follow-up at the intergovernmental and inter-agency levels and in the field as part of its general segment and continue to harmonize and coordinate the programmes of

work of the functional commissions responsible for follow-up. The President, with the help of the Secretariat, might hold regular consultations with the chairmen of those commissions.

The Union attached great importance to an integrated and coordinated follow-up to the major international conferences and suggested that the Council should send a clear message to that effect to ACC. It welcomed the efforts made by the three ACC ad hoc task forces and hoped that, after the expiration of their mandate, any follow-up mechanism would ensure monitoring of the utilization of the work they had done, feedback on country-level follow-up activities through the resident coordinator system and support for the intergovernmental process.

The Council should bear in mind the need to strengthen the Inter-Agency Committees on Sustainable Development and Women and Gender Equality and should welcome the ACC decision to integrate follow-up to the World Food Summit into the general process.

Follow-up to conferences at the field level was extremely important, and the Council might call upon all the organizations of the United Nations system to give effective support to the resident coordinator, with due regard for the work of the ad hoc task forces, and stress the need for close ties between the secretariat departments responsible for policy development and those dealing with the funds and programmes. The latter should have a greater input into the preparation of reports on conference follow-up submitted to the Council and its subsidiary organs.

Mr. MAQUEIRA (Chile) said that the commitments undertaken at the major United Nations conferences constituted a response to the uncertainties of globalization and an agenda for the international community's promotion of sustainable development in the sense of economic growth, social equality and environmental protection from a people-centred perspective. The Council's task was to ensure that the entire United Nations system worked in a coordinated way to implement those commitments and followed its guidelines for coordination and monitoring of follow-up to the conferences, with particular reference to the work of the ACC task forces and inter-agency committees. He welcomed the opportunity provided to Governments by the dialogue with the heads of those task forces, which, in conjunction with the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/73), enabled them to evaluate the work that had been done.

The task forces' work had focused on ensuring that the United Nations system provided country-level support for governmental action in areas such as the elimination of poverty and the adoption of a gender perspective. While the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/73) was extremely useful, it was unfortunate that, since the work of the task forces would not be completed until November 1997, it had been impossible to carry out a final evaluation thereof. The Council should thus take a decision which would allow it to consider the matter at the proper time.

His delegation supported the recommendation that the Council should consider the results of the comprehensive ACC review at its 1998 session; since, however, the Secretary-General's final evaluation would be available in late 1997, he suggested that the Council might consider the topic as early as the spring of 1998, at a session specifically devoted to the integrated and coordinated implementation and follow-up of the commitments made at the various conferences and summits. Such a session would enable the Council to fulfil its responsibility for coordinating and supervising its subsidiary organs. The dates of the session should be determined with the Secretariat in order to avoid conflict with any other relevant meeting. Such a session would also provide an opportunity for implementing the recommendations aimed at strengthening the work of the Council through interactive sessions and dialogue between Governments and the heads of Council's subsidiary organs. The session should thus include panel discussions with the chairmen of the relevant functional commissions, the executive secretaries of the regional commissions and the heads of the funds and programmes and of the ACC task forces and inter-agency committees.

His delegation also supported the Secretary-General's proposals (E/1997/73) that reporting on the outcome of the ACC follow-up review should focus on the area of statistics and indicators, taking into account the work of the Statistical Commission, that the Secretariat should be requested to report periodically to the Council under its agenda item 5 and that all organizations of the United Nations system should be called on to continue to contribute to the Council's thematic reviews. The recommendations on the eradication of poverty contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/58) should be supported by a Council resolution.

Mr. WANG Xinxia (China) said that follow-up to the major international economic and social conferences was the key to coordinated implementation of the commitments reached by consensus and the goals set at those conferences, which had focused on the promotion of the economic and social development of all countries, particularly the developing ones. Poverty elimination and social growth and development must be accompanied by economic growth if the commitments made were not to become a dead letter. Coordinated follow-up must be carried out at the national, regional and international levels. At the national level, there must be increased cooperation between Governments and development agencies, and the resident coordinators and thematic groups had a role to play in ensuring that the special needs and strategies of individual countries were taken into account. The numerous United Nations bodies involved in follow-up should avoid duplication and increase their efficiency through an appropriate division of labour and mutual reinforcement.

Mr. ERMAKOV (Russian Federation) said that the global conferences had played a crucial role in identifying the world's most pressing problems, devising solutions and mobilizing resources. Duplication must be avoided in operational follow-up by the appropriate bodies. The creation of effective machinery for inter-agency coordination was vital to enhancing the efficiency of the system and the action taken by ACC (E/1997/73) was to be welcomed.

Implementation of the agreed conclusions on coordination of United Nations activities for poverty eradication, approved by the Council at its substantive session of 1996 could serve as an example of effective cooperation involving the identification of key problems within overall themes. His delegation endorsed the need for a system-wide approach under ACC to assist Governments in meeting poverty-eradication targets.

The inclusion of poverty eradication in the agendas of the ACC inter-agency committees was to be welcomed. ACC must take proper account of the decisions of the subsidiary organs of the Council dealing with the issue, in order to facilitate a more direct link with intergovernmental machinery. Better coordination of the follow-up to the World Food Summit would also assist United Nations poverty-eradication activities and ACC should

implement the relevant Council decisions. The issue of coordinated follow-up to the Summit should also, incidentally, be included in the agenda for the forthcoming session of the General Assembly.

Ms. GALER (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that UNICEF had participated actively in the three inter-agency task forces and the Inter-Agency Committee on Women and Gender Equality to develop system-wide mechanisms for the implementation of the objectives of the major United Nations conferences. The task forces had endeavoured to improve the coordinated delivery of support at the regional and country levels, as part of the resident coordinator system, so that United Nations field offices could assist Governments and national institutions more effectively in their fulfilment of the conference commitments.

Since the establishment of the task forces, the UNICEF country Offices had helped to organize concrete follow-up at the country level and positive results had already been achieved in a number of countries.

Since the World Summit for Social Development, UNICEF had been implementing the 20/20 Initiative through global advocacy and country studies. Recent evidence had shown that, despite a reversal of the declining trend in budget allocations for the social sectors in many parts of the world, basic social services continued to be inadequately funded. On average, 13 per cent of national budgets and 10 per cent of donor funding were allocated to such services, though there was some slight evidence of an improvement in recent years.

In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank, UNICEF was promoting and supporting national reviews, undertaken by national experts, to respond to the following three key issues: the proportion of national budget and aid flows allocated to the basic social services, the scope for inter- and intra-sectoral reallocations in favour of such services, and improving the efficiency of the existing allocation of the social sector. The ultimate goal of those studies was to prioritize basic social services and to establish concrete 20/20 compacts between Governments and donors with a view to reaching the target set by the major United Nations conferences.

UNICEF had recently accepted the proposal by the United Nations Special Coordinator for Economic and Social Development to play the role of lead agency within the United Nations system in the coordination of the follow-up to the 20/20 Initiative and the Oslo Consensus on the 20/20 Initiative.

Mr. CHOWDHURY (Bangladesh) said that the importance his Government attached to the major international conferences had been manifested through country-level implementation and the establishment of various inter-ministerial mechanisms. The Council had a crucial part to play in follow-up activities, which should be reflected in the preparation of documents and the organization of its work. In the future, follow-up might perhaps be considered in the high-level segment.

He endorsed the recommendation in paragraph 67 of the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/73) concerning consideration by the Council of the results of the comprehensive review of ACC at its 1998 substantive session. Stressing the role of the regional commissions and country-level implementation, his delegation supported the proposal for the preparation of a compendium presenting a global picture of country-level implementation since 1990. It also supported the 20/20 Initiative and urged further participation by United Nations bodies therein. The participation of civil society was indispensable, particularly with respect to country-level implementation.

The Secretary-General's report on the implementation of the agreed conclusions of the 1996 coordination segment of the Council on the eradication of poverty (E/1997/58) was very useful and should guide the Council's work in that area. He also drew attention to the documents issued at the Microcredit Summit in February 1997 (A/52/113-E/1997/18), as that Summit had promoted the goals of the Rio, Copenhagen, Beijing and Istanbul conferences. Lastly, he wished to endorse the recommendation that the Council invite its functional commissions to make use of the work undertaken for the follow-up to the Children's Summit (E/1997/73, para. 70).

Ms. CASSAM (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)) said that the major world summits and conferences of recent years had served to review the development strategies of the past, and to examine the role of international cooperation in meeting the challenges of the future. UNESCO believed that it was important for the United Nations

system to strive for integrated coordination at all levels in the implementation of the various commitments, conventions and programmes of action resulting from those conferences. As the Secretary-General had proposed, United Nations conferences should be seen as a continuum linking the various dimensions of development within a coherent framework.

UNESCO was currently examining the recommendations of those conferences in diverse spheres of its competence and was developing an approach that would enable it to contribute effectively to the realization of the development goals of its member States. It had a specific interest in the advancement of women and education of girls; indigenous capacity-building; development of rural affairs; popular participation through democracy and respect for human rights; promotion of environmental awareness and the rational use of resources for sustainable development, and improvement of worldwide communications through the use of new information and communication technologies and improved access to those areas of knowledge. Its Medium-Term Strategy for 1996-2001 and its Programme and Budget for 1996, 1997 and 1998 included activities which were in accordance with the various programmes or plans of action adopted by the major conferences.

Mr. CASTRO CUERRERO (Colombia) said that his delegation shared the General Assembly's concern that a system of integrated and coordinated implementation of and follow-up to the major international conferences should be consolidated and appreciated all efforts made to define an intergovernmental framework. In that regard, his Government viewed with particular interest the discussions on the subject in ACC, which showed its determined support for inter-agency coordination at all levels. It also fully supported the Council's decision to entrust to the Commission for Social Development the periodic review of issues related to follow-up and the implementation of the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development and considered that the Commission had approached its task with the proper level of professionalism.

He described his country's participation in the follow-up at the regional level under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), particularly in the areas of environment protection and human settlements. At the national level, his Government had embarked upon a social policy entitled "The Social Leap Forward" which coincided with

the tenets and goals of the Copenhagen Declaration. A Social Solidarity Network had been established to improve the quality of life of the most vulnerable sectors of the country's population. His Government's commitment to social programmes was reflected in the increase in their share of the overall budget. In addition, a range of policies had been devised to implement the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, particularly the protection of the human rights of women and children, prevention of violence against women and the involvement of women in power-sharing and decision-making.

His Government attached particular importance to fulfilling its commitments under the World Food Summit Plan of Action, which required a multidimensional approach, including activities at the national, intergovernmental and inter-agency levels.

Mrs. McNISH (Jamaica) said that the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/73) provided a comprehensive overview of United Nations efforts to follow up the major international conferences and contained some worthwhile recommendations for the Council's consideration. Her delegation commended ACC and its various inter-agency committees and task forces on their work in addressing cross-cutting themes, promoting and organizing joint initiatives, and seeking to develop common frameworks in priority areas. The active involvement of the Bretton Woods institutions was particularly encouraging. Nevertheless, follow-up activities should not be left to the Secretariat alone and the Council's functional commissions had a strategic role to play. There was scope for further promotion of a coordinated approach among them.

She wished to underscore, in particular, the importance of the Programme of Action of the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and welcomed the follow-up action that had been undertaken in that regard. The comprehensive 1999 review of SIDS and the implementation of its Programme of Action would undoubtedly strengthen the focus on follow-up, coordination and integration.

Integrated follow-up and coordination must constitute a cooperative approach between the agencies of the United Nations system and national Governments since, in the final analysis, it was Governments that translated recommendations into action based on their specific development priorities.

Ms. CHAFIL GRAF (Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (UNAIDS)) said that while UNAIDS had not had the privilege of participating in the work of the task forces, she could assure the Council that it had been very active in addressing many of the issues on which that work had focused. HIV/AIDS had a severe impact on development prospects as well as on individuals, households and society. The ethical, legal and human rights aspects of the epidemic were extremely complex and, as such, constituted an important focus of the work of UNAIDS and its sponsors.

Having described some of the projects in which the Programme had been active, she informed the Council that a series of consultations for the purposes of regional coordination and cooperation on HIV was being held in collaboration with regional bodies, including the regional commissions, to tackle issues of globalization, operational issues and conference follow-up.

There were currently more country-based theme groups on HIV/AIDS than on any other issue. However, UNAIDS did not take gratification in those numbers alone. There had been successes, but there remained challenges for country-level coordination mechanisms and the Programme was ready to share its experience in the proposed follow-up mechanisms.

Mr. WINNICK (United States), having commended ACC on its work in developing a common framework to assist countries and in promoting a coordinated response by the United Nations system to cross-cutting themes, said he also welcomed the ACC report on the steps taken to ensure the integration of World Food Summit follow-up into its existing follow-up mechanisms, and reiterated his Government's interest in the ongoing participation by FAO in such coordination arrangements.

Governments had the primary responsibility for implementing the various programmes of action and ACC was thus to be commended on focusing its three task forces on country-based approaches designed to render assistance to countries in implementing the conference documents.

His delegation agreed with the assessment, contained in the Secretary-General's report (E/1997/73), that the structure of the General Assembly's agenda and the separate streams of work in the Second and Third Committees had not made it possible to consider conference follow-up

issues as "interlinked and contributing to an integrated framework". The Council should thus recommend to the General Assembly a reorientation of work in the committees to reinforce integrated conference follow-up.

His delegation was, however, encouraged by the attention the Council had devoted, since 1995, to promoting coordinated and integrated follow-up to conferences, including discussions on poverty eradication, mainstreaming the gender perspective and the inclusion of a separate agenda item on integrated and coordinated follow-up.

Having made a number of proposals relating to linkages with and guidance to ACC and the regional and functional commissions, complementarity among the functional commissions, coordination of the agencies of the United Nations system, the use of statistics and indicators, and reporting and supervision of coordination, he highlighted the importance of the involvement of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) particularly in view of their influence on successful implementation. The world conferences had demonstrated that Governments, NGOs and the private sector would achieve more by working together rather than working alone.

Mr. ROMAZZOTTI (International Movement ATD Fourth World) said that poverty-stricken people lived in appalling conditions which jeopardized their health, impaired every aspect of their lives and involved intolerable suffering. Implementation of the international commitments made at the World Summit on Social Development was thus urgent. It must not be forgotten, however, that poverty affected all the interdependent aspects of a person's life: economic, social, cultural, political and spiritual. A human being was an indivisible entity with indivisible rights. As Father Joseph Wresinski, the founder of the Movement, had emphasized, extreme poverty hampered people in the enjoyment of their rights and in the exercise of their responsibilities.

In a study entitled "Reaching the Poorest", UNICEF had explored ways in which partnerships could be forged with the neediest populations and the importance of linking the cultural, social, political and economic aspects of the problem. The elimination of extreme poverty, required a complete reappraisal of economic structures. It was a question not of alms-giving or

of increasing the riches available for distribution, but of creating a better distribution system. It was only by respecting people and their rights that a community could genuinely enrich itself.

There was thus a need for a bold rethinking of human activity to ensure that everyone participated in all its aspects. Such was the challenge thrown down before the international community by the very poor.

Ms. FAUCHÈRE (World Confederation of Labour), having commended the work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) as coordinator of the ACC task force, said her organization was seriously concerned that a number of specialized agencies and international financial institutions seemed reluctant to fulfil the commitments made at the World Summit on Social Development.

Although the efforts made by some regional commissions to improve cooperation were to be welcomed (E/1997/40), it was to be hoped that the institutional reforms of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) would enable Africa to participate more actively in the follow-up to Copenhagen and that the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) would also play a more substantial role. There was an urgent need to liberate sufficient resources to ensure that international commitments were translated into action at all levels.

Each national Government must define follow-up targets for the year 2000 and consider creating an interministerial committee to determine the implications on domestic policy of the Summit in terms of employment, quality of life and work, addressing the roots of poverty and promoting social cohesion by ensuring the participation and representation of all sectors of society. An interministerial committee would also determine the country's policies within the international and regional institutions. Each national parliament must work towards greater transparency in the fulfilment of its commitments and must ensure that civil society, including trade unions and NGOs, had the power to make proposals and monitor governmental action.

The regional commissions must take concrete actions to fulfil their commitments; and existing or newly emerging regional structures such as the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) and the European Union must implement integrated social development policies.

Furthermore, there was a need for concerted, system-wide action at the global level. Some agencies and organizations had great difficulty in coordinating their efforts. ILO had played an important role in employment and social development, the protection and promotion of workers' rights and coordination between the Bretton Woods institutions and the other organizations of the United Nations system, but it could not be expected to shoulder the entire burden alone. Those areas depended on a whole range of economic and other measures for which other organizations, particularly the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Trade Organization (WTO) were responsible. Cooperation between those organizations and ILO must therefore be enhanced.

All too often there appeared to be a complete discrepancy between the pledges made by Governments at the international level and the policies carried out on a daily basis by their administrations and the question arose whether the commitments entered into by Governments at the major international conferences were mere shams. The most important decisions in social life were largely subjected to the "expertise" of the financial organizations. It was high time that public policy ceased to be subordinated to money and forced to act against the interests of all.

Mr. GRAISSE (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that WFP would be contributing actively to the implementation of the World Food Summit Plan of Action. In preparing for the Summit, WFP had ensured that the question of food access, particularly for the poorest, would remain at the centre of the debate. The Programme had consistently stressed that food security was about people and not just about growing more food. Hunger was a powerful constraint to both economic and social development: a cause, not merely an effect, of poverty.

It was important, therefore, to invest in the producers of food and not just in its production, by promoting literacy and training, self-help activities and community asset-building. Education was a key to food security and women were a key part of the solution to hunger since they shouldered a major share of the responsibilities for household food security.

The world must meet the challenge of hunger immediately, since hunger today caused irreversible damage and led to hunger tomorrow, with malnourished women giving birth to babies whose start in life was already compromised. It was thus crucial to intervene in the short term, as well as pursuing policies which raised purchasing power over the longer term.

The international community must assess the potential role of the decision on mitigation of the possible negative effects of the Uruguay Round, adopted at Marrakech, since the liberalization of markets left many questions unanswered. Another prerequisite for food security was peace; acute hunger was increasingly found in the presence of political instability.

The key areas in which WFP would be providing effective support to the World Food Summit Plan of Action were thus the linking of emergency relief to development, supporting women, especially in emergencies, and ensuring that food aid interventions reached the poorest people. WFP was committed to allocating at least 90 per cent of its development resources to Low-income Food Deficit Countries and at least 50 per cent to least developed countries (LDCs).

Mr. KAABACHI (Tunisia) said that the various United Nations secretariats and ad hoc groups constituted an adequate mechanism for implementing the follow-up to global conferences, but stressed that adequate resources must be mobilized in view of the importance of the themes those conferences had addressed. It was at the country level, however, that the follow-up work must be realized and that the relevant social indicators should be collected. The Council continued to be the appropriate forum for providing policy guidance to the secretariats involved in the follow-up work.

Mr. PARATIAN (International Telecommunication Union (ITU)) drew the Council's attention to the Inter-Agency Project on Universal Access, Basic Communication and Information Services which sought to promote the right to communicate as part of the ACC integrated follow-up to conferences. ACC had commended ITU on the timely completion of the project which constituted yet another example of effective inter-agency collaboration. Given the rapid technological advances, improving access to basic communication and information services for all was essential to United Nations efforts to secure sustainable human development.

An important feature of the Project was assistance to the organizations of the United Nations system in modernizing their information and communication strategies with a view to enhancing their capacity and effectiveness in using the new technologies. The creation of a United Nations system-wide Intranet would facilitate inter-agency cooperation in support of country-level action. Ensuring the accessibility, compatibility and convergence of the various agencies' computer-based systems was therefore crucial.

The meeting rose at 7.10 p.m.